

THE POLITICAL THEORY OF AYN RAND

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The problem undertaken in this thesis is a study of Ayn Rand's political theory as presented in her writings. Rand considers herself both a novelist and a philosopher; her writings are not primarily political in nature. Thus, compiling her political philosophy requires an interpretation of her views on all subjects.

Two sources were used for the data found in this study-- Rand's novels and her non-fiction works written primarily for her periodical, The Objectivist. The novels form a frame of reference for her philosophy and show the chronological development of her ideas. The novel Atlas Shrugged contains the essence of her political philosophy. Rand's non-fiction works provide a more detailed explanation of, and defense of, her specific political theories.

This thesis is basically descriptive in nature. Chapter One provides background information on both Ayn Rand and her philosophy, Objectivism. The essence of her political theory is found in her view of man's nature which is the subject of Chapter Two. Man is born with free will and through use of

his mind can understand reality and achieve happiness in productive work pursued in one's own self interest. Rand's view of man assumes that he holds, due to his nature, certain rights. Man's rights as Rand views them are discussed in Chapter Three. Man's right to life assumes the right to property without which he could not sustain his life. The right to property is possible only in a political-economic system of laissez-faire capitalism. Chapter Four deals with Rand's theories of government. Basically, it consists of two parts: the first part describes her philosophy of the best state while the second part deals with the misuse of force in government today. Chapter Five, the conclusion, integrates the various parts of her political philosophy presented in the earlier chapters.

The results of this description of Rand's political theory lead to the conclusion that the validity of her theory depends upon acceptance of her basic premise: that man is a being of volitional consciousness capable of sustaining his own life, and that society's only role is to protect man's rights and to outlaw the private use of force. Specific aspects of her theory are based on this basic assumption. (Historically, man's nature has never been understood, and this, according to Rand, has led to altruism as

the basic ethical force in the world. Man needs to be re-examined in the light of his true nature. This will result in a new understanding of man and his relationship to society; it will lead to a view of man as a selfish individual who can control his own existence if left free of government controls.

Rand's novels are widely read, yet her political philosophy has seldom been given more than cursory examination. This study is undertaken in order to determine that she does present in her writing a consistent political theory. In particular, she has laid a firm foundation for a political theory in her view of man's nature and his relationship to society. In other areas, however, Rand does not present fully developed views. For example, she says little concerning the way man can make his political wishes known and how he can go about reducing the functions of his government. She may yet speak to these subjects as her writings in recent years have been turning more to specific aspects of political philosophy. In spite of some obvious omissions which may yet be corrected, Rand has made a significant contribution to the study of political theory through the development of her philosophy of Objectivism.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this thesis is to extract Ayn Rand's political theory from her books and writings. Throughout her writings Rand presents her own original philosophy which she calls Objectivism. The scope of her concern is not one branch of the social sciences any more than it is one aspect of man's life: she is concerned with the totality of man and his relationship to society--man's politics, man's psychology, man's literature and art, and man's ethics.

[At the center of Ayn Rand's philosophy is man. She profoundly believes that man's nature has never been consistently understood throughout history. Man has generally been viewed as born with original sin. Man's interests and desires were termed immoral simply because they were his own interests and desires. Good was to be found in sacrifice of oneself for the sake of others; it became one's duty to atone for existence by suffering for the sake of others. Selfishness is man's evil and can only be overcome by negating his life through sacrifice. Sacrifice became

man's highest virtue, the essence of morality. Rand challenges this view of man by countering that he is a being of volitional consciousness who must use his mind in order to achieve the essence of morality, rational selfishness.]
Man's proper relationship to society and legitimate form of government stems from Rand's view of man: only laissez-faire capitalism provides a political-economic system compatible with man's nature.

Background

Ayn Rand is a novelist, publisher, philosopher, and political activist. She is a "popular" figure whose works are read and discussed by people of all backgrounds. During the 1960's she appeared frequently on television talk shows and gave numerous college lectures. During this period she was often interviewed and quoted in magazines and newspapers. Since the late 1960's she has generally withdrawn from the public spotlight, preferring to let her books and articles speak for her. She has a fear of being misquoted and attacked for her beliefs and thus avoids interpersonal confrontations. Yet her writings continue. Her best-sellers, The Fountainhead and Atlas Shrugged, have been read by millions. Other books and articles have a modest popularity mostly found among the ardent followers of Objectivism.

Is Rand primarily a novelist or a philosopher? She has written several novels, but the last one was published in 1957. Her writings since that date have been wholly devoted to expounding her philosophy of Objectivism. Rand answers that she is both a novelist and a philosopher.

In a certain sense, every novelist is a philosopher, because one cannot present a picture of human existence without a philosophical framework; the novelist's only choice is whether that framework is presented explicitly or implicitly, whether he is aware of it or not, whether he holds his philosophical convictions consciously or subconsciously. This involves another choice: whether his work is his individual projection of existing philosophical ideas or whether he originates a philosophical framework of his own. I did the second. That is not the specific task of a novelist; I had to do it, because my basic view of man and of existence was in conflict with most of the existing philosophical theories. In order to define, explain... and present my concept of man, I had to become a philosopher in the specific meaning of the term.¹

Rand was born in St. Petersburg, Russia, in 1905. The young Ayn reached maturity during the hunger and terror-filled times of the early communist system then engulfing Russia. Even at this point in her life she was startled by the fact that while everyone complained about the physical hardships under communist rule few people seemed critical of its ideology. It was during this period that Ayn decided to become a novelist, finding her first hero in the novel,

¹Ayn Rand, "Preface," For the New Intellectual (New York, 1963), pp. vii-viii.

Les Miserables, by Victor Hugo. He was the character Enjolras, described as "the marble lover of liberty who had but one passion, the right; but one thought, to remove all obstacles."² Adolescence also marks the point in Rand's life when she decided she was an atheist. Her reasons give insight into her early thinking. There is no proof of God; the concept of God is insulting to man, implying that man is an inferior being worshipping an ideal. "By her view, there could be no breach between conceiving of the best possible and deciding to attain it. She rejected the concept of God as morally evil."³ One other aspect of Rand's character becomes apparent during this time in her life: she never experienced any conflict between her mind and her values. There is in her mind a complete integration of the rational and the moral which furnishes her with a unique outlook.

Rand came to the United States in 1925. She worked at various jobs in Hollywood and eventually became a script writer, supporting herself while working on her books. In 1927 she married Frank O'Conner. They have no children.

²Nathaniel Branden, Who Is Ayn Rand? (New York, 1962), p. 159.

³Ibid., p. 162.

Today they live very much in isolation in a New York City penthouse near the offices of her publication.

The years 1927-1957 were spent in writing novels. The first, We the Living, was published in 1936 and has a political theme--the individual against the state. Anthem, a novelette written in 1937, deals with the meaning of man's ego and presents a future, totally collectivized society in which the word "I" has vanished from the world and is rediscovered by the hero. The first notes on The Fountainhead were dated 1935. Rand comments, "My philosophy, in essence, is the concept of man as a heroic being, with his own happiness as the moral purpose of his life, with productive achievement as his noblest activity, and reason as his only absolute."⁴ Howard Roark, the hero of The Fountainhead, is the personification of such a man. The book presents him as an individualist ideologically set against the collectivists surrounding him. The Fountainhead, Rand's first commercially successful novel, was published in 1943. Its theme is ". . . individualism versus collectivism, not in politics, but in man's soul; the psychological motivations and the basic premises that produce the character of an individualist and a collectivist."⁵ In

⁴ Ibid., p. 192.

⁵ Rand, For the New Intellectual, p. 68.

this book Rand defines two ways of facing life, two types of man--the man of ego, of independent judgment, whose values are the product of his own mind and who lives only for his own sake, and the dependent man who avoids the responsibility of judging, who places others above self--the creator and the second-hander. Atlas Shrugged was begun in 1946 with the sentence, "Who is John Galt?"⁶ Published in 1957, it presents Rand's most complete Objectivist philosophy to date. She states that it was necessary to work out her full philosophical system before she would write the book, in particular, before she could write John Galt's speech which is the climax of Atlas Shrugged. The novel presents the story of what happens when the best minds of the world go on strike. The idea for the book grew out of Rand's refusal to become an altruist. Discouraged over the lagging sales of The Fountainhead, she wondered if she should write any more books since people would not listen to this one. Friends told her that it was her duty to enlighten the public, even when they resisted. She asked why: what right does anyone have to the products of another person's mind? What if all the creative minds of the world went on strike? The idea for Atlas Shrugged was born. Its basic thesis is ". . . the

⁶Ayn Rand, Atlas Shrugged (New York, 1957), p. 11.

role of the mind in man's existence--and, as corollary, the demonstration of a new moral philosophy: the morality of rational self-interest."⁷ Since Atlas Shrugged Rand has compiled numerous non-fiction works containing articles usually first published in The Objectivist. She is currently at work on a new novel.

Since the publication of Atlas Shrugged in 1957 and a flurry of lectures and speeches in the 1960's, Rand has spent most of her time as editor of The Objectivist (called The Objectivist Newsletter until 1965), which she began with Nathaniel Branden in 1962. Branden was extremely important in the Objectivist movement in the late 1950's and 1960's. An ardent admirer of The Fountainhead, Branden became friends with Rand and eventually the leader of a small study group formed at Rand's home during the years she was working on Atlas Shrugged. In 1958, Branden organized a series of lectures entitled, "The Basic Principles of Objectivism." The Nathaniel Branden Institute, established in 1961, offered a varied series of lecture courses on the philosophy of Objectivism as well as diverse papers on the relationship of Objectivism to the various social sciences. Rand had no financial interest in the Institute, except for small payment

⁷Rand, For the New Intellectual, p. 88.

for papers published or lectures given, but she gave full sanction and endorsement to it. The Objectivist Newsletter began publication in 1962. Its purpose was to discuss the application of Objectivist philosophy to the current problems of society. Between 1962 and 1968 both the Newsletter and the Institute prospered. However, in 1968 Branden and Rand severed all business and personal ties. In an extraordinary article published in the June, 1968, issue of The Objectivist, Rand explained her reasons for the break. In essence, she had become convinced that Branden no longer consistently and rationally espoused Objectivist philosophy. In her opinion, he had also neglected his writing obligations. She did not repudiate his writings on Objectivism, stating that they were consistent with her philosophy, but she did state she would repudiate all his future writings. Since 1968 Rand has been the only editor of The Objectivist. The Nathaniel Branden Institute closed. In October, 1971, The Objectivist was discontinued, to be replaced by a bi-monthly publication, The Ayn Rand Letter.

Political activism is important to Objectivist philosophy. Ayn Rand encourages her followers to speak out on issues, to support those political candidates who best exemplify the Objectivist philosophy. Rand herself is politically active.

She used the last of her savings during very lean years to work for the election of Wendell Wilkie because she believed him to be an uncompromising advocate of free enterprise. As Wilkie retreated into "me-tooism" during the campaign, Rand began to understand the nature of the conservative betrayal she believes exists in this country. In later years she supported Barry Goldwater for President. On today's political scene she sees Ronald Reagan as the most hopeful political figure. The Objectivist has been an important tool in the fight against encroaching collectivism. Articles are written on such subjects as medicare and compulsory draft, always with an eye to challenging their validity in the face of the philosophy of rational self-interest. Rand's philosophy has remained unchanged throughout the years, but she has updated her criticism to encompass such contemporary issues as The New Left and ecology. Her latest work, The New Left: The Anti-Industrial Revolution, deals with both these subjects.

Rand's Philosophy for Change

Rand's philosophy, in all its facets, calls for the birth of a new intellectual. All her efforts are to this end. It is in the birth of a new intellectual man that she sees hope for the world of all men. In the title chapter of her book, For the New Intellectual, she wrote:

The world crisis of today is a moral crisis--and nothing less than a moral revolution can resolve it; a moral revolution to saction and complete the political achievement of the American Revolution The New Intellectuals must assume the task of building a new culture on a new moral foundation They will have to be radicals in the literal and reputable sense of the word: "radical" means "fundamental." The representatives of intellectual orthodoxy, conventionality and status quo, the Babbitts of today, are the collectivists. Let those who do care about the future, those willing to crusade for a perfect society, realize that the new radicals are the fighters for capitalism.

It is not an easy task and it cannot be achieved overnight. But the New Intellectuals have an inestimable advantage: they have reality on their side.

The goal of Ayn Rand's writing and the goal of the Objectivist movement is to pave the way for a moral awakening. The moral code Rand challenges in all her works is the doctrine that no man has the right to exist for his own sake. All of the ethical systems that have substantially influenced mankind have had self-sacrifice as a theme. That Objectivism stands diametrically opposed to the view of man as a sacrificial animal makes it a unique philosophy: "I know that I am challenging the cultural tradition of two and a half thousand years."⁹

Rand sees politics as but one branch of philosophy and not a separate goal which can be achieved without a

⁸ Ibid., p. 54.

⁹ Branden, Who Is Ayn Rand?, p. 239.

wider ideological context. "Politics is based on three other philosophical disciplines--metaphysics, epistemology and ethics--on a theory of man's nature and of man's relationship to existence. It is only on such a base that one can formulate a consistent political theory and achieve it in practice."¹⁰ When men try to rush into politics without such a base the result is simply a conglomeration of range of the moment actions. To Rand's thinking this is what the conservatives have done. Objectivists are not conservatives, but radicals; Objectivists seek to give capitalism the philosophical base it has never had and without which it will perish. A change in America's political ideas must be preceded by a change in its cultural ideas, for today's culture, according to Rand, is dominated by the philosophy of mysticism and collectivism with statism as the inevitable political result. Conservatives are only trying to catch on the coattails of this movement. Conservatives do not act, they only react. They have no ideological base. What is needed is a completely new view of the nature of man, a view of man as a rational being--the ideal man, the new intellectual.

¹⁰Ayn Rand, "Check Your Premises," The Objectivist Newsletter, I (New York, 1962), 1.

CHAPTER II

THE NATURE OF MAN

A study of Rand's political theory begins with her view of man and his nature. Rand believes that she is challenging all historical views of man in her philosophy, Objectivism. Man is not born in sin; he is, at birth, in both mind and emotion, "tabula rasa." He has no innate knowledge and, therefore, no innate values; man's mind determines the value of both.

In determining the method of survival of man Rand compares him and his life to the life of animals. Given the appropriate physical environment, all living organisms, except man, are set by their nature to do automatically those things necessary for survival. Man has no automatic means of survival--he must solve the problem of survival by using not only his perceptual level of consciousness, which he shares with animals, but his conceptual level of consciousness, which is his ability to think. Man cannot survive, as animals do, by living certain cycles over and over again. Man's life is continuous--every day holds the

sum total of all the days before. Man cannot live by the range of the moment for,

If he is to succeed at the task of survival, if his actions are not to be aimed at his own destruction, man has to choose his course, his goals, his values in the context and terms of a lifetime. No sensations, percepts, urges or "instincts" can do it; only a mind can

Man's survival qua man means the terms, methods, conditions and goals required for the survival of a rational being through the whole of his lifespan--in all those aspects of existence which are open to his choice.¹

Man cannot survive as anything but man. He can exist as a sub-human creature, but man has to choose to succeed as man. The ethics of Objectivism holds that man's life is the standard of value; man's own life is the purpose of each individual.

Man's Life: The Standard of Value

Rand does not merely observe that man pursues values, but asks what the facts of man's nature are that give rise to values. A value is ". . . that which one acts to gain and/or keep. A value is the object of an action An entity incapable of initiating action . . .--an entity not confronted with alternatives--could have no purpose, no

¹Ayn Rand, "The Objectivist Ethics," The Virtue of Selfishness (New York, 1964), p. 24.

goals, and hence no values."² Man must choose his actions, values and goals by the standard of that which is proper to man in order to enjoy the ultimate value, which is the end in itself, man's own life. "The three cardinal values of the Objectivist ethics--the three values which, together, are the means to and the realization of one's ultimate value, one's own life--are: Reason, Purpose, Self-Esteem, with their corresponding virtues: Rationality, Productiveness, Pride."³

There is only one real alternative for living organisms--existence or non-existence. Existence makes the concept of value possible. There are no values pre-existing in man; he must choose values in order to survive. Man's life is sustained by self-generated action. He is a being of volitional consciousness, without innate ideas, who must discover, by a process of thought, the values upon which his life depends. If man is to sustain his existence, he must discover the principles of action required to guide him in dealing with nature and with other men. His need of these principles is his need of a code of values.

Man's nature determines his specific means of survival, his choice of values. At birth man's mind is blank, he

²Nathaniel Branden, Who Is Ayn Rand? (New York, 1962), pp. 21-22.

³Rand, The Virtue of Selfishness, p. 25.

has no innate knowledge of what is true or false, good or evil to his welfare, no innate knowledge of what values to select and what goals to pursue. He needs such knowledge to deal with reality successfully--to live--and only reason can provide it. In order for him to know what values and virtues to choose, a standard is necessary. Man must choose his values by the standard of that which is required for a human being, which means, ". . . he must hold man's life (man's survival qua man) as his standard of value. Since reason is man's basic tool of survival, this [standard] means: the life appropriate to a rational being"4 To live, man must think--he must produce the values his life requires for survival--and reason is his only means of obtaining knowledge.

While Rand argues that reason is man's means for formulating values, David Hume would urge that reason alone should dictate no way of action, no particular values. Reason, indeed, should be a slave to the emotions and should obey them. Most values, according to Hume, are really conventions seemingly valid because men have habitually employed them. They are, in reality, habits or standards of behavior and

⁴Branden, Who Is Ayn Rand?, p. 24.

not eternal verities. Rand blasts Hume for these beliefs and suggests that the type of man Hume describes will never operate beyond the perceptual level of awareness in which he passively reacts to the experience of immediate concretes with no capacity to form abstractions. Hume is seen by Rand as only one of the many post-Renaissance philosophers who launched a concerted attack on man's conceptual faculty.

To be or not to be means to think or not to think. A desire to live does not give man the knowledge required for living, for man must choose to use his mind. He can choose not to use his mind and thus can act as his own destroyer.

Man has been called a rational being, but rationality is a matter of choice--and the alternative his nature offers him is: rational being or suicidal animal. Man has to be man--by choice; he has to hold his life as a value--by choice; he has to learn to sustain it--by choice; he has to discover the⁵ values it requires and practice his virtues--by choice.

Rand grants to man great responsibility for his actions and values. Knowledge does not come to him automatically; he must choose to think, choose to observe reality effectively and to test the conclusions of his observations. He must choose to be guided by his rational judgment.

In contrast, Immanuel Kant holds that reality, as perceived by man's mind, is a distortion. Man's consciousness

⁵Ayn Rand, Atlas Shrugged (New York, 1957), p. 940.

is not valid because he only sees partial truths and therefore rational certainty is impossible. Reality, as man perceives it, must not be the standard for choosing values. Instead, Kant urges man to choose values on the basis of selflessness, on the basis of what is best for others. This value ethic of Kant's stands in direct opposition to Objectivism which stresses that objective reality as seen in man's mind must be the only source of values.

Man's mind is not infallible; he can make errors of judgment. If he does not correct the error, he acts against reality and is, in fact, acting irrationally. There are two ways in which man can function in response to his nature. If man takes pleasure in the act of thinking and volitionally using his mind to choose rational values--if he lives and acts as his nature requires--then self-esteem is the result. He has confidence in his ability to deal with reality. If man evades the process of thought and drifts along at the mercy of his feelings, then he sabotages his intellectual growth and rational consciousness and slowly begins to develop the belief that he is unfit for existence. Constantly faced with choices he decides not to choose, that he is not capable of choosing, that others best choose for him. The choice, again, is to think or not to think. Man, then, must

choose his values or let someone else do the choosing for him. If he leaves the choice to others and, therefore, does not use his mind, he is not a man in the sense that Rand uses the term.

Man chooses his values using his own life as the standard for making his choices. "All that which is proper to the life of a rational being is the good: all that which destroys it is the evil."⁶ Man's life is the standard of morality. "Since life requires a specific course of action, any other course will destroy it. A being who does not hold his own life as the motive and goal of his actions, is acting on the motive and standard of death."⁷ Man does not have to live, but if he does choose to live he must live by the work and judgment of his own mind.

Rand thus sees morality as a practical, selfish necessity for man's survival as man. The source and justification for values is neither God nor society, neither mystical nor social--the source of values is man himself. The will of God is not the standard of the good and the justification for ethical values as the religions would have man believe. Nor is society the source of values, for society would then stand

⁶Ibid.

⁷Ibid.

above ethical principles, since it is the source of them. The good would then become whatever society said was good.

Today, as in the past, most philosophers agree that the ultimate standard of ethics is whim (they call it "arbitrary postulate" or "subjective choice" or "emotional commitment") and the battle is only over the question of whose whim:⁸ one's own or society's or the dictator's or God's.

By way of answering those philosophers who claim that no relation can be established between ultimate values and the facts of reality, Rand stresses the fact that living entities exist necessitates the existence of values and of the ultimate value which is one's own life. ". . . Thus the validation of value judgments is to be achieved by reference to the facts of reality. The fact that a living entity is, determines what it ought to do."⁹ Man, then, as a living entity, must use his mind to acquire knowledge from the facts of reality in order to establish his values. This is the essence of morality found in Rand's philosophy of Objectivism.

Men, however, are not robots, they do have emotions which affect their values and therefore determine their actions. Just as man's cognitive faculty is blank at birth, so his emotional faculty is blank. Men have no preconceived

⁸Rand, The Virtue of Selfishness, p. 15.

⁹Ibid., p. 17.

whims, desires, or even instincts. "Man's emotional mechanism is like an electronic computer, which his mind has to program--and the programming consists of the values his mind chooses."¹⁰ Man has no choice about feeling something is good or bad, but his standard of values determines what he will consider good or bad. If he chooses, the irrational man turns his life into a civil war. Man is free to choose, but he is not free to succeed beyond the range of the moment, nor to escape the consequences. Happiness is that which is good for man by a rational standard of values; it is ". . . that state of consciousness which proceeds from the achievement of one's values."¹¹ Thus happiness is the result of rationally pursuing one's values to sustain one's life and not, as the hedonists would claim, an ethical primary for registering one's whims.

Happiness: The Goal of Man's Nature

Happiness is man's highest moral purpose. How does one become happy? Happiness is the product of observing rational values and is achieved by acting upon one's standard of value, one's own life, and not by following one's whims.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 28.

¹¹ Rand, Atlas Shrugged, p. 940.

According to Rand, ". . . the moral cannibalism of all hedonist and altruist doctrines lies in the premise that the happiness of one man necessitates the injury of another."¹² If desire is the ethical standard and one man's desire is as valid as another's, then one man's desire to be free has no more moral ethical validity than another's desire to enslave him. Rand believes that most people hold this premise as an absolute--one man's self interest can only be served at someone else's expense. This will not change, she argues, as long as the concept of rationality is omitted from the meaning of values. Man's self interest can only be served when one accepts a non-sacrificial relationship with others as his absolute standard of value. Human good does not require human sacrifice; rational interests of men do not clash.

Man--every man--is an end in himself, not the means to the ends of others. He must exist for his own sake, neither sacrificing himself to others, nor sacrificing others to himself. The pursuit of his own rational self interest and of his own happiness is the highest moral purpose of his life.¹³

The Randian man is a creator or producer. He uses his mind to discover values; to pursue these values is

¹²Rand, The Virtue of Selfishness, p. 30.

¹³Ayn Rand, "Introducing Objectivism," The Objectivist Newsletter, I (August, 1962), 35.

productive work. Nothing is given to man; even historical facts must be assimilated by each man as an individual. Each act of thinking a man must do alone, for no man can use his brain to think for another.

The creator lives for his work. He needs no other men. His primary goal is within himself. The parasite lives second-hand. He needs others. Others become his prime motive.

The basic need of the creator is independence. The reasoning mind cannot work under any form of compulsion. It cannot be curbed, sacrificed or subordinated to any consideration whatsoever. It demands total independence in function and in motive. ¹⁴To a creator, all relations with men are secondary.

Rand believes all men are born to be creators since all men are born with free will. Men are not equal except in the sense that they all have equal right to use their minds to its highest rational potential. They can choose not to use their minds and by default become a second-hander who lives on the products of the minds of others. The creator is the ideal man:

He is the man who is passionately in love with existence, and passionately in love with his own consciousness

He is the man who holds nothing above the rational judgment of his mind--neither wishes nor whims nor the unproved assertions of others He is the man who has no desires held in defiance of reason He is the man who does not substitute his emotions

¹⁴Ayn Rand, The Fountainhead (New York, 1943), p. 681.

for his mind. He is the man with the highest capacity for feeling--because his feelings are the product of rational, noncontradictory values.¹⁵

Man is a being of volitional consciousness with the free will to think or not. Man can achieve a state of awareness, can conceptualize, can be human, or he can remain on an automatic, range of the moment animal level of awareness. It is man's choice, not God's nor society's. But man, in the Randian sense, does choose to think, not just in work, but in every aspect of his life.

Man must live life on earth. Philosophers, theologians and moralists have perpetuated the greatest sin possible by maintaining that there is a dichotomy between the soul and the body. They have claimed throughout history that the body and those things of the earth must be damned and that man must seek the higher goals of the soul. This concept is anti-man and therefore anti-life. Suffering is not man's inevitable fate; man is not helpless here on earth; life is not tragic. This view of man results in moral agnosticism; it results in a concept of man as impotent, incapable of making value judgments, incapable of deciding his own fate. It results in abdication of one's life to

¹⁵Branden, Who is Ayn Rand?, p. 61.

someone else's values. Man must reject the teaching of those who say that man's intellect is impotent to solve his problems. Man is rational and can plan and act long range. There is no escape from reality. Man to live, must choose; he must accept certain values and reject others. If he abdicates this responsibility and lets someone else assume it, he becomes a parasite, not of body, but of consciousness. He is not seeking material support but begging humanity to tell him how to live. This means:

. . . to set his goals, to choose his values, to prescribe his actions--never to leave him alone, at the mercy of his own unreliable mind. He may be willing to work, to obey and even to think (within a limited square); if others will assume the responsibility for his ultimate direction.¹⁶

The man who abdicates his right to rational thought leaves standards for other people to set. Even his personal worth is judged by others; others have the right idea simply because it is their idea. This type of person has great self-contempt. He is willing to follow any political idea others hold, for who is he to judge? He is, according to Rand, the man who has served the collectivist-altruist ethic throughout man's history. By contrast, the man of Rand's

¹⁶Nathaniel Branden, "Social Metaphysics," The Objectivist Newsletter I (November, 1962), 47.

writings, the man every person can choose to be, knows only those things to be true and right that he perceives with his own rational mind as beneficial to his own life.

That the first man described above is far more prevalent today is the result of the legacy of mysticism in philosophy and not the result of man's own weakness, nor of the nature of existence. This legacy must be seen for what it is--an attempt to sell altruism as the ethical standard for man's life with the resultant view that man is tragic, guilty and cannot achieve happiness for himself. Man must rid himself of the altruist ethic that claims that he must make the welfare of others his primary moral concern and his moral justification for existence. Man must live for his own sake; he must deal with other men as traders getting what they earn and not taking or giving what is not earned. This applies on the spiritual as well as the material level of existence.

Erich Fromm would disagree with Rand. The concept of earned and unearned value or love must be removed from man's relations with one another, for such concepts have made men turn away from one another. Whether one person cares about another should not be determined by their "value," but because men are in essence, identical. This view stands in

direct opposition to Rand's view of man as a "trader" who gives love (or anything else) as the price paid for value received. If love is divorced from values, then love becomes a blank check, a promise that one will be forgiven anything, will always be taken care of. Love is an act of faith to Fromm, while Rand sees love as a moral tribute.

The man who does not value himself, who is made to feel guilty for serving his own life, cannot value anything or anyone. Altruism, far from generating love for one's fellow man, results in sacrifice of one man for the sake of another. It breeds hatred, not love, dictatorship, not freedom.

The basic social principle of the Objectivist ethics is that just as life is an end in itself, so every living human being is an end in himself, not the means to the ends or the welfare of others--and, therefore, that man must live for his own sake, neither sacrificing himself to others nor others to himself. To live for his own sake means that the achievement of his own happiness is man's highest moral purpose.¹⁷

¹⁷Rand, The Virtue of Selfishness, p. 27.

CHAPTER III

MAN'S RIGHTS

Rand sees man as a being born free to use his mind to form values based on objective reality. The achievement of happiness is man's goal. The rights of man are a natural outgrowth of man's nature; these rights protect man in his relationship with others.

"Rights" are a moral concept--the concept that provides a logical transition from the principles guiding an individual's actions to the principles guiding his relationship with others--the concept that preserves and protects individual morality in a social context--the link between the moral code of a man and the legal code of a society, between ethics and politics. Individual rights are the means of subordinating society to moral law.¹

The Right to Life

There is only one fundamental right, according to Rand, and that is a man's right to his own life. All other rights are consequences of this right to life. Life requires self-sustaining action; therefore, man's right to his life requires that he be free to take all actions necessary in order for a rational being to live his life. Rights are

¹Ayn Rand, "Man's Rights," The Objectivist Newsletter II (April, 1963), 13.

logically derived from man's nature and from his needs to insure survival.

If life on earth is the standard . . . man has a right to live and pursue values, as his survival requires; he has a right to think and to act on his own judgment--the right to liberty; he has a right to work for the achievement of his values and to keep the results--the right of property; he has a right to live for his own sake, to choose and work for his own personal goals--the right to the pursuit of happiness.²

The fundamental right to life requires the corollary right to property. The right to property is the right to action. It is not a guarantee that man will own things, but only that man will own what he earns. "Without property rights, no other rights are possible. Since man has to sustain his life by his own effort, the man who has no right to the product of his effort has no means to sustain his life. The man who produces while others dispose of his product is a slave."³

The Concept of Freedom

Rand's concept of rights means freedom in its strictest sense--the absence of coercion. It has to do with the removal of restraint, not with being free to constrain

²Nathaniel Branden, Who Is Ayn Rand? (New York, 1962), p. 47.

³Rand, "Man's Rights," p. 13.

someone else. The right to life means the right to support one's own life, not that man has the right to demand someone else support it. The right to property means man has the right to actions necessary to earn, use and dispose of property, not that others should give him property. Rights are moral principles that protect a man's freedom of action, they are not restrictions or obligations on others. For example, the right to free speech enables a man to express his ideas without fear of government suppression, it does not mean that this man has a right to require that someone provide him with a lecture hall or television time to express his ideas. Rand views the concept of rights as a positive thing--man's freedom to act to pursue his own goals. Man's rights impose no obligations upon his neighbors except for a negative one, to abstain from violating his rights.

The Source of Rights

What is the source of man's rights? Man's rights are not the gift of God or of society, but the result of man's nature. To base man's rights on divine law is to base them on mysticism and to say that there is no rational proof or justification for such rights. To argue that rights are a gift from society is a denial of the concept of rights: if

they are granted to man by permission, they can be withdrawn. If society grants man's rights to him then man is the property of society.

. . . The source of man's rights is not divine law or congressional law, but the law of identity. A is A--and Man is Man. Rights are conditions of existence required by man's nature for his proper survival. If man is to live on earth, it is right for him to use his mind, it is right to act on his own free judgment, it is right to work for his values and to keep the product of his work. If life on earth is his purpose, he has a right to live as a rational being: nature forbids him the irrational.⁴

The concept of group or collective rights is nonexistent, Rand argues. There are no rights but individual ones; "collective rights" is a contradiction in terms. Any group is made up of individuals, and the rights the group has can only be derived from the individual members through their voluntary, individual choice. A group as such has no rights, for to say it does is to say that rights belong to some men, but not to others. A man cannot acquire rights nor lose them by joining a group. The term individual rights is redundant, nothing can possess rights but an individual.

Just as there is no such thing as collective rights, there is also no such entity as national rights, but only the right of each individual within a nation. There is no

⁴Ayn Rand, Atlas Shrugged (New York, 1957), pp. 985-986.

national right of a country to choose any form of government it pleases--it may do it, but not by right. Just because Nazi Germany was the government supported by majority vote does not grant it the right to use its government to destroy the world. Other countries do not have to recognize its right to exist, for there are no national rights, only individual rights, and these Nazi Germany abrogated. If any country does not recognize the rights of its individuals, it is an outlaw society, existing by might, but still an outlaw one.

Rand sees the concept of individual rights as a relatively new concept in man's history. Every political system in history has been based on some kind of ethic, and the dominant ethic of man's political history has been based on the altruist-collectivist doctrine which subordinated the individual to either the will of God or the supreme will of the state. Morality was applicable to the individual, but not to society which was outside moral law as the source of that law. Since society is only a group of individual men, this meant, in effect, that the rulers of society were exempt from moral law (except for traditional rituals). The good, historically, has meant what is good for society, the race, the nation. Rand uses the theocracy

of Egypt, the unlimited majority rule of Athens, the welfare state of Rome, the absolute monarchy of France, the gas chambers of Nazi Germany, the slaughterhouses of the Soviet Union as only a few examples to prove her point that their common characteristic is the fact that society stood above moral law and were thus all variants of an amoral society.⁵

The Concept of Rights in the United States

She sees the founding of the United States as a landmark--a turn away from the tribal premise of what is good to the subordination of the tribe to moral law.

The principles of man's individual rights represented the extension of morality into the social system--as a limitation on the power of the state, as man's protection against the brute force of the collective, as the subordination of might to right. The United States was the first moral society in history.⁶

It was the first society in human history to declare that man's life is his by right, that man's life is an end and not a sacrificial means to the ends of others. Society was viewed for the first time, according to Rand, not as an end in itself, but as a means for the voluntary co-existence of individuals. Rights had historically been granted to man

⁵Rand, "Man's Rights," p. 13.

⁶Ibid.

by society: the United States held that man's rights were his by the very nature of his existence and that government's only moral purpose was the protection of these rights. Government's choice was simply whether or not to recognize that man's rights exist; government could not grant them. Its role became one of servant and no longer one of ruler.

The Bill of Rights is directed against the government of the United States: it is an explicit statement that individual rights supersede any public or social power. When the Founding Fathers speak of the right to the pursuit of happiness they are not claiming that everyone has the right to be happy by forcing others to make him happy, but that every person is free to take those actions necessary to bring happiness to himself. Rights are positive concepts, enabling one to maintain the freedom of action and thought necessary for the survival of one's own life. Man's freedom in a political sense has come to mean freedom from physical compulsion. The Bill of Rights is intended to guarantee freedom from compulsion, not the freedom to constrain others. It is directed as a protection against governmental action and not against private action.

When a country's constitution places individual rights outside the reach of public authorities, the sphere of political power is severely delimited--and

thus the citizens may, safely and properly, agree to abide by the decisions of a majority vote in this delimited sphere. The lives and property of minorities or dissenters are not at stake, are not subject to vote and are not endangered by any majority decision; no man or group holds a blank check on power over others.

That this concept of freedom is not explicit in the American political ethic today is due, Rand believes, to the fact that America's philosophy was not explicitly applied nor consistently practiced. Early in United States history there began to occur a switch in the concept of rights from the political to the economic realm. Americans now speak of the right to a good education, the right to freedom from monopolies, the right to good health.

Any alleged "right" of one man, which necessitates the violation of the rights of another, is not and cannot be a right.

No man can have the right to impose an unchosen obligation, an unrewarded duty or an involuntary servitude on another man. There can be no such thing as "the right to enslave."⁸

Any undertaking which involves more than one man requires voluntary consent. Rand maintains that the Founding Fathers fully intended for individual rights to be placed outside the reach of governmental authority thus severely limiting

⁷Ayn Rand, "Collectivized Rights," The Objectivist Newsletter, II (June, 1963), 23.

⁸Rand, "Man's Rights," p. 14.

the sphere of public power. If this concept had been strictly adhered to, there would not be today the confusion over political versus economic rights. Man's rights are, in Rand's view, rapidly being destroyed

. . . (a) by switching the concept of rights from the political to the economic realm (claiming the 'right' of some men to be supported by the forced labor of others) and (b) by ascribing to provide citizens the violations constitutionally forbidden to the government (such as the issue of 'censorship'⁹) thus freeing the government from any restrictions.

Potentially, the most dangerous threat to individual rights is found in governmental power because it holds a legal monopoly on the use of force.

⁹Rand, "Collectivized Rights," p. 21.

CHAPTER IV .

THE BEST STATE

Is there any benefit to man to be found in living together in society? Rand believes there is if it is a human society in which man can obtain the two benefits she sees derived from social existence. The first of these is knowledge; man is the only species capable of transmitting his store of knowledge from one generation to another. Man can thus know more than he alone could learn in his own lifetime. Second, society permits division of labor to occur, therefore allowing each man to do the work he does best and trade for what other goods he needs with those who do other work best. It allows greater knowledge and greater productive return. These benefits of social living require a society in which men are rational. No society geared to the needs of parasites who treat rational men as sacrificial animals to be penalized for their virtues (a society based, according to Rand, on the altruist ethic) can be of value.

Every political system is based on and derived from a theory of ethics The Objectivist ethics is the moral base needed by that politico-economic system

which, today, is being destroyed all over the world, destroyed precisely for lack of a moral, philosophical defense and validation; the original American system, Capitalism.¹

It is Rand's contention that capitalism has never developed an ethical, political theory to support itself. Objectivism can supply the moral base for it.

The Proper Government

Two questions determine the nature of any social system: ". . . Does a social system recognize individual rights?--and: Does a social system ban physical force from human relationship?"² "A government is the means of placing the retaliatory use of physical force under objective control--i.e., under objectively defined laws."³ Rand believes that man has totally ignored the fact that government holds a monopoly on the legal use of force and as a result of this monopoly its actions must be rigidly and objectively controlled. Its actions must not be open to whim or caprice.

¹Ayn Rand, "The Objectivist Ethics," The Virtue of Selfishness (New York, 1964), p. 33.

²Ayn Rand, "What Is Capitalism?," The Objectivist Newsletter, IV (November, 1965), 54.

³Ayn Rand, "The Nature of Government," The Objectivist Newsletter, II (December, 1963), 45.

Might must be subordinated to right. This is done under a proper social system by leaving the individual legally free to do anything he wishes as long as other's rights are respected. The government official, however, can only do those things legally permitted by law.

There is only one basic principle to which an individual must consent if he wishes to live in a free civilized society: the principle of renouncing the use of physical force and delegating to the government his right of physical self defense, for the purpose of an orderly, objective, legally defined enforcement.⁴

What if a disagreement arises between two men over a contract they have made? The use of force cannot be left to private individuals. Thus arises the government in the function of arbiter to solve disputes according to objective laws. The need for a court system develops. The basic principle involved is that no one receives value from another without the owner's consent--no one's rights may be left to the whim of another man. ". . . Such, in essence, is the proper purpose of a government, to make social existence possible to men, by protecting the benefits and combating the evils which men can cause to one another."⁵

⁴Ibid., p. 46.

⁵Ibid.

According to Rand man is not free if individual rights are not recognized and protected. To recognize man's individual rights requires the banishment of physical force, for force is the only means of taking rights away.

It is the basic metaphysical fact of man's nature-- the connection between his survival and his use of reason--that capitalism recognizes and protects.

In a capitalist society, all human relationships are voluntary. Men are free to cooperate or not, to deal with one another or not, as their own individual judgments, convictions and interests dictate. They can deal with one another only in terms of and by means of reason The right to agree with others is not a problem in any society; it is the right to disagree that is crucial. It is the institution of private property that protects and implements the right to disagree--and thus keeps the road open to man's most valuable attribute (valuable personally, socially, and objectively): the creative mind.⁶

This, according to Rand, is the basic difference between capitalism and collectivism. Only capitalism provides man with the freedom in society which is necessary for his survival as man. Only capitalism can answer yes to the question, is man free?

The reason why men need government (and government's only moral justification) is to bar physical force from social relationships.

The proper functions of a government fall into three broad categories, all of them involving the issues of physical force and the protection of men's rights:

⁶Rand, "What Is Capitalism?," p. 54.

the police, to protect men from criminals--the armed forces, to protect men from foreign invaders--the law courts, to settle disputes among men according to objective laws.

Rand does not try to be specific about the actual implementation of these categories. What is essential is the principle to be implemented--that the purpose of law and of government is the protection of individual rights. She believes that today this principle has been all but forgotten with a terrible inversion having taken place:

Instead of being a protector of man's rights, the government is becoming their most dangerous violator; instead of guarding freedom, the government is establishing slavery; instead of protecting men from the initiators of physical force, the government is initiating physical force and coercion in any manner and issue it pleases; instead of serving as the instrument of objectivity in human relationships, the government is creating a deadly, subterranean reign of uncertainty and fear, by means of non-objective laws whose interpretation is left to the arbitrary decisions of random bureaucrats . . .--so that we are fast approaching the stage of the ultimate inversion: the stage where the government is free to do anything it pleases⁸, while the citizens may act only by permission

What should be the decision making process in the best state? Who is to decide what is right or wrong? Rand answers that nobody decides, for ". . . reason and reality are the only valid criteria of political theories. Who

⁷Rand, "The Nature of Government," pp. 46, 49.

⁸Ibid., p. 50.

determines which theory is true? Any man who can prove it. Theories, ideas, discoveries are not created collectively; they are the products of individual men."⁹ In politics men who do not think accept whatever the intellectual leaders of the time offer them. If they do think they accept the more rational idea. "The best proof of the power of ideas--the power of reason for men of all levels of intelligence--is the fact that no dictatorship was ever able to last without establishing censorship."¹⁰

Numbers do not dictate the truth or falsehood of an idea. Voting is merely a political device for deciding the method for carrying out the basic principles of a society. The principles themselves are determined by the facts of political reality as seen by those men who choose the field of political theory as their work. Rand holds that ". . . a majority without an ideology is a helpless mob, to be taken over by anyone."¹¹

The United States has abandoned its own philosophy and is falling apart. Once an example to the world of a

⁹ Ayn Rand, "Subjectivist versus Objectivist," The Objectivist Newsletter, IV (February, 1965), 8.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ayn Rand, "Theory and Practice," Capitalism: The Unknown Ideal (New York, 1967), p. 138.

nation founded on political theories stretching from Aristotle to John Locke to the Founding Fathers, today this nation is splintering into warring tribes called economic pressure groups. The doctrine for decision making to which the United States subscribes today is unlimited majority rule which is:

. . . the doctrine that the majority may choose anything it wishes, that anything done by the majority is right and practical, because its will is omnipotent.

This means that the majority may vote away the rights of a minority--and dispose of an individual's life, liberty, and property, until such time, if ever, as he is able to gather his own majority gang. This, somehow, will guarantee political freedom.¹²

Political freedom requires much more than this, however; it requires a complex knowledge of the theory and practical implementation of political events. The political system established in the United States is not based on unlimited majority rule, but on its opposite--individual rights. The individual's rights are not to be abrogated by either majority vote or by minority plotting. The individual is not to be left to submit to his neighbors' wishes nor to his leaders'. The will of the majority is not omnipotent: physical force of muscles and numbers is not a substitute for justice, reality and truth.

¹²Ibid.

Collectivism and statism are encroaching more and more upon our rights as individuals. They are affecting every aspect of our lives and requiring the surrender of an ever-growing amount of arbitrary power to the government. The political philosophy of collectivism is based on a view of man as a congenital incompetent, a mindless creature who must be fooled and ruled by a special elite with an unspecified claim to superior wisdom. Collectivism and statism have made it nearly impossible for individuals to participate in decision making. Thus men are rapidly succumbing to the belief that they are incompetent to judge among a morass of choices confronting them, that the choice is best left to someone who knows.

110 . . . the march of collectivism and statism . . . has increased the difficulties of the voter (though not his opportunities). When the government was restricted to its proper function--that of policeman and umpire--an honestly applied common sense was sufficient for a voter to make an intelligent choice. But when the government controls every aspect of a complex industrial civilization, and the voter is asked to choose the men who will determine the fate of industry, science, art and every other human activity--what knowledge will be sufficient to make that choice?¹³

What Rand seeks to challenge is the whole concept that there are any rights other than individual rights. There

¹³Ayn Rand, "Who Will Protect Us From Our Protectors?," The Objectivist Newsletter, I (May, 1962), 17.

are no consumer rights or rights belonging to one group or another; there is no right to education or to health or to a minimum income. "There are only the Rights of Man--rights possessed by every individual man and by all men as individuals."¹⁴ For the same reason--that there are only individuals with rights--Rand questions the use of the word equality in its present political context. Equality is a political term meaning equality before the law. It refers to the fundamental right every man possesses because he is a human being. These rights--this equality--cannot be infringed upon by man-made institutions. Rand states that the altruists have turned equality from a political concept into a metaphysical one, ". . . the equality of personal attributes and virtues, regardless of natural endowment or individual choice, performance and character."¹⁵ Since nature does not endow men with equal beauty and intelligence, and volition leads men to make different choices, egalitarians propose to abolish the unfairness of nature and of volition by depriving men of the benefits. Since virtues cannot be redistributed, the

¹⁴Rand, "Man's Rights," p. 14.

¹⁵Ibid.

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altruists seek to establish a new aristocracy by inverting the social pyramid and creating the aristocracy of non-value. Everyone cannot be raised to be equal, therefore, everyone must be levelled. This, Rand states, is the true explicit purpose of government financed education, taxation, government control of business and industry, welfare legislation--it is the true explicit purpose of any and all governmental intervention into the individual lives and rights of its citizens.

end

Altruists are no longer concerned with material wealth, not even with its "redistribution," only with its destruction, but even this is only a means to an end. Their savage fury is aimed at the destruction of intelligence--of ability, ambition, thought, purpose, justice; the destruction of values qua values.¹⁶

The understanding of government's proper function has historically been a very recent achievement. Probably all governments in history have held some small idea of the proper role of government--some notion of law and order and justice--but only the United States of America two hundred years ago identified and acted to implement the nature and the needs of a free society. The government established was based upon objectively valid principles that did not depend upon the whims of individuals nor leave

¹⁶Ayn Rand, "The Age of Envy," The Objectivist, X (July, 1971), 9.

any loopholes for the growth of tyranny. That statism is today taking place in this same country is the result of the fact that the government has chosen to forget that the Constitution is a limitation on the government, not on private individuals, that it does not set the conduct for private individuals, but the conduct for government. The Constitution is a charter of the citizens' protection against the government. The power of statism in this country results from the implicit nature of the Constitution and from the lack of a moral ethical base for capitalism.

Laissez-Faire Capitalism: Foundation For Proper Government

The only proper government is one that fully recognizes and protects individual rights. No such government exists today, for such a government would have to be based on laissez-faire capitalism, the ideal political-economic system wherein men deal with one another as traders by free, voluntary exchange for mutual benefit and wherein no man may initiate physical force against others. Laissez-faire capitalism has never been a reality historically: it is, to Rand, the unknown ideal. "In a system of full capitalism there should be (but historically has not been) a complete separation of state and economics, in the same way and for

the same reasons as the separation of state and church."¹⁷

The right to life is the source of all rights, and to support his life man must be able to dispose of the product of his own effort. Property rights thus precede the ability to implement all other rights. Since man cannot survive (in the Randian sense, capable of dignity and noble aspirations) without the right to property and its corollary rights, capitalism is the only rational political-economic system for man. The moral justification of capitalism does not lie in the claim that it is the best way to achieve the common good; nor in the practical justification that it is the best system for allocation of resources; its justification ". . . lies in the fact that it is the only system consonant with man's nature, that it protects man's survival qua man, and that its ruling principle is: justice."¹⁸

Rand totally rejects the whole concept of government as an agent of economic interests and the notion that a political system reflects a certain economic system.

The fundamental issue . . . is not what kind of economic controls a government enforces nor on whose behalf; the issue is a controlled economy versus an

¹⁷ Ayn Rand, "Introducing Objectivism," The Objectivist Newsletter, I (August, 1962), 35.

¹⁸ Rand, "What Is Capitalism?," p. 54.

uncontrolled economy--that is, slavery versus freedom. Laissez-faire capitalism is not . . . government control of economics for the benefit of businessmen; ¹⁹ it is the complete separation of State and Economics.

The separation of state and economics is thus the defining principle of capitalism. This separation has not been defined historically nor practiced consistently and has resulted in confusion so that capitalism is blamed for evils which were caused, in fact, by the abrogation of capitalism.

But A is A--and free trade is free trade. Essential to Ayn Rand's political philosophy is that a proper government must have no economic favors to dispense-- it must be constitutionally forbidden to abridge the freedom of production and trade on anyone's behalf.²⁰

Capitalism must be given an ethical, moral base if it is to survive. No idea, no theory can exist upon range of the moment thinking; there must be worked out a philosophy for capitalism as a political-economic theory, for the moral principles man accepts determine the kind of society man will create: the political system is the product of the ethical system. It is Objectivism as a philosophy that Rand believes can give capitalism the moral base it needs, for individualism and capitalism are the result of an ethical philosophy

¹⁹ Nathaniel Branden, Who Is Ayn Rand? (New York, 1962), p. 50.

²⁰ Ibid.

based on rational self interest. Rand believes capitalism has never had a philosophy because it is diametrically opposed to the tribal premise man has inherited historically. The tribal notion sees the ultimate value as society or "the common good" or "the public interest." Objectivism sees the ultimate value as the happiness of man as an individual, rational being. Capitalism has never been defended on these grounds, rather, those few philosophers who have attempted to defend it have done so from a tribal premise. John Stuart Mill, for example,

. . . is generally regarded as one of the classic [defenders] . . . of the rights of the individual. But individual rights is precisely the concept that Mill does not support He projects an essentially collectivist premise: the premise that the group should permit the individual to be free because that will allow him best to serve its interests--thus implying that man does not in fact have the right to freedom, but is, morally, the property of the collective.²¹

Herbert Spencer defended capitalism by arguing that a free market economy will serve to weed out the unfit for the good of the whole. No defender of capitalism chose to defend it by challenging ". . . the altruist-collectivist frame of reference in which all discussions concerning the value of capitalism were held."²² Capitalism did not originally

²¹ Ibid., pp. 16-17.

²² Ibid., p. 17.

rest and cannot ever survive on an altruist moral base, yet no other base has ever been philosophically provided. Western Civilization has rejected the theology of mysticism, but not its ethics. Man still clings to the code of sacrifice, with society instead of God as the beneficiary of man's sacrifice. Capitalism will not be saved by defending it on the grounds that man should sacrifice himself to God as religion would demand. This philosophy is what delivered man to the collectivists in the first place. So called "conservatives" do not try to establish a philosophy for capitalism; they are, rather, most guilty of a lack of defense for it. They adopt a "me-too" attitude regarding capitalism as a system compatible with government controls; they do not distinguish between laissez-faire capitalism with economic freedom and a mixed economy with government "statist" controls. Conservatives do not dare challenge the morality of altruism, yet capitalism cannot survive by altruism's moral premise.

The Need for Philosophy

Rand is intensely critical of the profession of philosophy in the United States today. It is they, the philosophers, who have abdicated their role in political theory.

It is political philosophy that sets the goals and determines the course of a country's practical politics. But political philosophy means: abstract theory to identify, explain and evaluate the trend of events, to discover their causes, project their consequences, define the problems and offer the solutions.²³

There has been no interest recently in political theory (except Marxism) on the part of philosophers who claim that there is no such thing as political theory, but only random, concrete examples below philosophy's concern. There have been two conflicting views on what the task of philosophy is:

One side holds that the task is to "train minds and advance thought" and that politics is not philosophy's concern. The other side holds that it is, and that philosophy must deal with "the issues of the day." What subject is omitted from this dichotomy? Politics-- in the full, exact, philosophical meaning of the term.

Politics is the study of the principles governing the proper organization of society; it is based on ethics, the study of the proper values to guide men's choices and actions. Both ethics and politics, necessarily,²⁴ have been branches of philosophy from its birth.

Most men are unable to form a comprehensive view of life themselves; they accept what philosophy offers them. And what is that? "Ever since Hegel and Kant . . . philosophy

²³ Ayn Rand, "The Chickens' Homecoming" The Objectivist, IX (June, 1970), 5.

²⁴ Ibid., p. 4.

has been striving to prove that man's mind is impotent, that there's no such thing as reality and we wouldn't be able to perceive it if there were"25 Man has been told that he is not capable of knowing or judging what is good or bad, but that the "public interest" or the "consensus" does know and can judge. Philosophy should provide man with a view of life; it should gather data, observe causal connections and implement long range visions. It should show man the ethical values upon which his life depends. That it does not is a clear sign of the moral bankruptcy of American society.

Not only is there no philosophy of capitalism, there is no philosophy of anything. There is no ideological trend today--no direction, no vision of the future. The United States is a country without a political philosophy, but with a pervasive emotion at work, the emotion of fear. Men believe their need for political principles will disappear if they will only wipe out all such principles. But since neither an individual nor a nation can exist without some form of ideology, anti-ideology is now the explicit and dominant ideology of America's bankrupt culture. This

²⁵ Ibid., p. 5.

anti-ideology has a new and very ugly name, "government by consensus."²⁶

Government by consensus means government by the greatest number, whether decided by vote, public opinion polls, or other means. The consensus encompasses all acceptable political views. How are minority rights and the rights of the smallest number, the individual, to be considered? They are not to be considered unless there is a sizable "gang" to support them. Consensus supporters hold that consensus leads to moderation in political beliefs and actions. Moderation is the supreme virtue of the consensus concept; all groups can accept a "reasonable" solution to a particular problem. Compromise is the goal of the consensus makers--compromise on this issue or on that issue, but never any effort to state long range guidelines. Rand asserts that there can be no such thing as compromise between opposite principles; compromise satisfies no one. Consensus as an attempted philosophy has not worked, for it is in reality dogmatically anti-ideology. It simply wants agreement this minute, on this issue, with absolutely no thought to the next minute or to the larger problem.

²⁶Ayn Rand, "The New Fascism: Rule by Consensus," The Objectivist Newsletter, IV (May, 1965), 19.

A political ideology is a set of principles aimed at establishing or maintaining a certain social system; it is a program of long range action Anti-ideology consists of the attempts to shrink men's minds down to the range of the immediate moment, without regard to past or future, without context or memory--above all, without memory, so that contradictions cannot be detected, and errors and disasters can be blamed on the victims. In anti-ideological practice, principles are used implicitly and are relied upon to disarm the opposition, but are never acknowledged, and are switched at will, when it suits the purpose of the moment. Whose purpose? The gang's. Thus men's moral criterion becomes, not "my view of the good--or of the right--or of the truth," but "my gang, right or wrong."²⁷

Without a firm ideological program, man's protest against statism will only serve the statist. The "me-tooism" of conservatives has not resulted in a philosophy supporting capitalism, but has, in fact served the interests of the statist. It is futile to fight against something when one does not know what one is fighting for.

The liberal welfare-statist movement in this country, according to Rand, represents a movement toward a hidden, unadmitted, implicit fascism. The United States is not a fascist state yet, but neither is it an essentially private enterprise system any longer. Rand sees the United States as a very unstable mixed economy--a mixture of socialist and communist schemes and fascist controls, along with the

²⁷Ayn Rand, "The Wreckage of the Consensus," The Objectivist, VI (April, 1967), 2.

remnants of capitalism. This mixed economy is the faithfully carried end product of pragmatism,

. . . the philosophy which holds that there is no objective reality or permanent truth, that there are no absolute principles, no valid abstractions, no firm concepts, that anything may be tried by rule of thumb, that objectivity consists of collective subjectivism, that whatever people wish to be true is true, whatever people wish to exist, does exist-- provided a consensus says so.²⁸

To avert the final disaster of fascist government in the United States, it is pragmatic thinking that has to be understood and rejected. Rand urges man to reject it in favor of Objectivism, to ask not whose gang man will support, but who is right in light of objective reason and one's own survival.

Rand warns man, however, to see the hidden fascist philosophy in leaders who supposedly argue for a return to government by the people, but, in fact urge no such thing. She uses George Wallace as an example.

Lacking any intellectual or ideological program, Wallace is not the representative of a positive movement, but of a negative. He is not for anything, he is merely against the rule of the "liberals." This is the root of his popular appeal; he is attracting people who are desperately, legitimately frustrated, bewildered and angered by the dismal bankruptcy of the "liberals'" policies, people who sense that something

²⁸Rand, "The New Fascism: Rule by Consensus," p. 24.

is terribly wrong in this country and that something should be done about it, but who have no idea what to do.²⁹

Wallace and all men of his type are not defenders of individual rights, but merely of states' rights; they are not against the unlimited, arbitrary power of government, but against its centralization. "The break-up of a big gang into a number of warring small groups is not a return to a constitutional system nor to individual rights nor to law and order."³⁰ Wallace and his type represent the crude elements from which implicit fascism is to come, with the emphasis on racism, primitive nationalism instead of rational patriotism, militant anti-intellectuality, and the "activism" of physical force to solve social problems.

What must be discarded, once and for all, is the altruist ethic, for it is this ethic that forms the base for the collectivists, the consensus seekers, the de-facto fascists. Their basic premise is the denial of individual rights, ignoring the fact that the protection of individual rights is the only moral purpose of government. Rand states again and again that the possibility of force must be removed from

²⁹Ayn Rand, "The Presidential Candidates," The Objectivist, VII (June, 1968), 5.

³⁰Ibid.

private relationships; it should be government's purpose to place the use of force under objective control. It is important to point out that Rand uses the word force in a broad sense, meaning not only physical force leading to injury or restraint, but any use of compulsion on one's mind or actions.

Man must understand the use of force by the statist societies in order to rid them of the altruist-collectivist ethic and to establish for the first time a rationally selfish ethic that will form the moral base for the philosophy capitalism needs.

In the world of the present, men regard the right of government to initiate force against its citizens as an absolute not to be debated or challenged. They stipulate only that force must be used "for a good cause" All the enemies of the free market economy--communists, socialists, fascists, welfare statist--openly aspire to a single goal: to reach a position where they will be empowered to impose their ideas on others at the point of a gun Whatever the differences in their specific programs, they are unanimous in their belief that they have a right to³¹ dispose of the lives, property and future of others.

The moral justification for the rule of force is man's need of things which men of ability produce.

Statism is a system of institutionalized violence and perpetual civil war, that leaves men no choice but to fight to seize power over one another. In a full

³¹Branden, Who Is Ayn Rand?, pp. 53-54.

dictatorship that civil war takes the form of bloody purges In a "mixed economy," it takes the form of "pressure group" warfare, each group fighting for legislation to extort its own advantages by force from all other groups.³²

The Immoral Use of Force

If men doubt that force is the result of the altruist ethic and that it is the dominant theme in political relationships today, Rand suggests the facts show that it is. The Berkeley rebellion of 1964 had as its central theme ". . . the supremacy of the immediate moment and commitment to action."³³ Rand finds the walking embodiment of modern philosophy in the Berkeley rebels: "Our age is witnessing the ultimate climax, the cashing-in on a long process of destruction, at the end of the road laid out by Kant."³⁴ Kant divorced reason from reality; his descendents have been widening the breach. Pragmatism established the range of the moment view ". . . that chronic doubt--the absence of firm convictions, the lack of absolutes--is the

³²Ayn Rand, "War and Peace," The Objectivist Newsletter, I (October, 1962), 44.

³³Ayn Rand, "The Cashing In: The Student Rebellion," Capitalism: The Unknown Ideal (New York, 1967), p. 241.

³⁴Ibid., p. 246.

guarantee of a peaceful, 'democratic' society."³⁵ The philosophical impotence of the older generation resulted in the fact that they were not able to stand firmly or offer any rational answer to the rebels. Logic, in the light of present day philosophy, was on the side of the rebels; to answer them would require total philosophical re-evaluation. The rebellion showed that when reason is abandoned, force is the only alternative. Rand views the Berkeley rebellion as a kind of miniature preview of what will happen to the country at large if the present trend toward force as the method for dealing with relationships persists. The ideological purpose of the rebellion was to gain acceptance for the necessity of force as the means of settling political disputes. The students attempted to get Americans to accept civil disobedience as a proper tool of political action. It is important to note that while the student rebellion did not arouse much public sympathy, neither did it meet with any ideological opposition.

Is there any place for civil disobedience in society, any situation in which it is justifiable? Rand says there is, but not in the way in which the Berkeley rebels justify it.

³⁵ Ibid., p. 247.

Civil disobedience may be justifiable, in some cases, when and if any individual disobeys a law in order to bring an issue to court, as a test case. Such an action involves respect for legality and a protest directed only at a particular law which the individual seeks an opportunity to prove to be unjust. The same is true of a group of individuals when and if the risks involved are their own.³⁶

There is, however, no justification in a civilized society for mass civil disobedience which violates the rights of others--one person's rights cannot be gained at the expense of another's; the end does not justify the means. ". . . Mass disobedience is an assault on the concept of rights: it is a mob's defiance of legality as such The attempt to solve social problems by means of physical force is what a civilized society is established to prevent."³⁷ The Berkeley rebels attempt to justify their use of force by drawing a distinction between force and violence, with violence being any coercion by actual physical contact while force is any other way of violating rights. Thus seizing a microphone unlawfully is force; being dragged away from it is violence: force is justifiable, violence is not. This results in a moral inversion: the initiation of force becomes moral and the resistance of force becomes immoral.

³⁶ Ibid., 256.

³⁷ Ibid.

The right to self defense is obliterated. The students claim that there is no clear demarcation between freedom of ideas and freedom of action: if one has the right to express an idea then one has the right to act upon it. The line between freedom of speech and freedom of action is, however, a clear one, Rand argues: the line is drawn by the ban on the initiation of physical force. When this ban is broken no political freedom of any kind can remain in existence, for

. . . if the freedom to express ideas were equated with the freedom to commit crimes, it would not take long to demonstrate that no organized society can exist on such terms and, therefore, that the expression of ideas has to be curtailed and some ideas have to be forbidden, just as criminal acts are forbidden. Thus the gullible would be brought to concede that the right of free speech is undefinable and "impracticable."³⁸

The Berkeley incident points out another example of the moral inversion of American society. Rand suggests that the rebels took advantage of the principles of a free society, in effect, using their rights to undercut them by showing that they are impractical. This was especially true in their use of freedom of speech. However, ". . . there can be no such thing as the unrestricted freedom of speech of someone else's property."³⁹ In reality what the students

³⁸ Ibid., p. 258.

³⁹ Ibid.

demonstrated is a point farthest removed from their goals:
". . . that no rights of any kind can be exercised without property rights."⁴⁰ The range and application of individual rights can be established only on the basis of property rights, for without property rights there is no way to avoid a hopeless clash of varying views, causes and interests.

Rand considers the right to property as a necessary part of the concept of the right to life; one cannot perpetuate one's life without the free use of his "property." The Constitution's Bill of Rights is a protection against governmental actions, not private action. That protection is now being destroyed, according to Rand, particularly in the area of free speech. Censorship is a term applicable only to governmental action; no private action is censorship. Yet the collectivists claim that a private individual's refusal to finance an opponent or a newspaper's refusal to employ writers whose policies it opposes, involves censorship. "An individual has no right to dispose of his own material means by the guidance of his own convictions--and must hand over his money indiscriminately to any speakers or propagandists who have a 'right' to his property."⁴¹ This theory

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 259.

⁴¹ Ayn Rand, "Man's Rights," The Objectivist Newsletter, II (April, 1963), 13.

of economic rights completely negates the fact that
". . . freedom of speech includes the right not to agree,
not to listen and not to finance one's own antagonists."⁴²

The right to one's own life is the most central part of the right to property. It is in the philosophy of the military draft that Rand finds the most glaring example of the negation of man's rights. Just as an individual has the right to self defense, so a government has the right to retaliate if attacked. Therefore, an army is necessary. However, the only army morally defensible in a civilized society is a volunteer one.

Of all the statist violations of individual rights in a mixed economy, the military draft is the worst. It is an abrogation of rights. It negates man's fundamental right--the right to life--and establishes the fundamental principle of statism: that a man's life belongs to the state, and the state may claim it by compelling him to sacrifice it in battle.⁴³

Rand argues that if government can send a man into battle without his consent then all rights are negated by that state. The government has ceased to be man's protector, having failed to protect man's basic right. A common argument in favor of compulsory military service is that rights

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ayn Rand, "The Wreckage of the Consensus II," The Objectivist, VI (May, 1967), 1.

impose obligations. This argument implies that rights are gifts of the state and must be paid for by offering life in return. But the government is the protector of man's rights; it cannot claim the right to a man's life as payment for that protection.

The only "obligation" involved in individual rights is an obligation imposed, not by the state, but by the nature of reality . . . which means the obligation to respect the rights of others, if one wishes one's own rights to be recognized and protected.⁴⁴

Rand views the draft as involuntary servitude and, therefore, clearly unconstitutional. A volunteer army is the only moral way to defend a free country, and it is also the best way--more efficient and dedicated. A country faced with foreign aggression has never lacked for volunteers.

Rand argues in the same vein concerning government proposals asking young people to give two years of life to service for their country:

That proposal represents the naked essence of altruism in its pure and fully consistent form. It does not seek to sacrifice men for the alleged benefit of the state--it seeks to sacrifice them for the sake of sacrifice. It seeks to break a man's spirit--to destroy his mind, his ambition, his self-esteem, his self-confidence, his self⁴⁵

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 5.

Rand sees such a proposal as politically much worse than the draft, for while the draft at least offers the excuse that one is preserving one's freedom in time of danger, the two year service proposal, if accepted by the people, means that men accept the altruist premise that their lives are best served by serving others. "These are not men who are being whipped: these are men who take the lash obediently and whip themselves."⁴⁶

Do men have the right not to serve in the draft and should they refuse to serve? Rand declares that morality ends where a gun begins: no one can make a judgment for another on the subject of compulsory draft, but a man is not morally bound to serve. Is it, according to the Objectivist ethic, morally wrong to serve in a compulsory army if one disapproves? No, says Rand, compliance with a law is not a sanction of that law.

All of us are forced to comply with many laws that violate our rights, but so long as we advocate the repeal of such laws, our compliance does not constitute a sanction. Unjust laws have to be fought ideologically; they cannot be fought or corrected by means of mere disobedience and full martyrdom⁴⁷

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 8.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

One primary Objectivist principle holds that the government in a free society may not initiate the use of physical force, but may only use force in retaliation. Rand asserts that the imposition of compulsory taxes does represent an initiation of force. In a fully free society taxation, payment to the government for services performed, must be voluntary. The principle of how to implement voluntary government finances is not, however, the task of political philosophy, but of law, and is premature: the principle will be practicable only in a fully free society whose government has been constitutionally reduced to its proper functions. Rand does offer two tentative suggestions as possible methods of voluntary taxation. A government lottery is one possibility. Another is a tax levied on contracts made between individuals with only those contracts that have been taxed insurable by the government. Protected contracts are a necessary thing, a service citizens should be willing to pay for. They would, however, not be required to do so. Under Rand's proposal of taxation on credit transactions the cost of government financing would be borne most by those who frequently enter into contractual agreements--the more economically affluent in society. All citizens would benefit from the police protection, court system, and armed

forces financed through voluntary taxation, but the cost would not require sacrifice on the part of any one group in society.

What is important to realize at this time in America's "mixed economy" is the fallacy of compulsory taxation. Compulsory taxation is based on the historical premise that the government is the ruler of the people and as such should act as the people's benefactor granting services gratuitously. Before the United States can institute a system of voluntary taxation this premise has to be challenged and overturned. The government must instead be regarded as a servant to its citizens--a servant who must be paid for his services--and not as a benefactor who dispenses something for nothing.

The principle of voluntary government financing rests on the following premises: that the government is not the owner of the citizens' income and, therefore, cannot hold a blank check on that income--that the nature of the proper governmental services must be constitutionally defined and delimited, leaving the government no power to enlarge the scope of its services at its own arbitrary discretion.⁴⁸

Voluntary government financing would be sufficient to pay for the legitimate functions of government, but not enough to provide support for myriad "public" projects, nor

⁴⁸Ayn Rand, "Government Financing in a Free Society," The Virtue of Selfishness (New York, 1964), p. 118.

to finance other nations' projects and wars. In a free society with voluntary government financing there would be ". . . no legal loophole, no legal possibility for any redistribution of wealth--for the unearned support of some men by the forced labor and extorted income of others" ⁴⁹ No one would be supported because he was unable or unwilling to pay the costs for maintaining his own existence. It is this principle that has to be understood: that citizens will be willing to voluntarily pay for those services they need, but will not be willing to finance those that are not in their own interests.

Rand argues against welfare legislation and programs like medicare and social security from the standpoint that such laws abrogate the rights of every individual to his life, since maintenance of life requires the right to the fruits of one's own labor. As a corollary she sees the passage and implementation of such laws as evidence of ever-encroaching statism and its basic ingredient, gang warfare of pressure groups trying to obtain such laws for its own particular gang. Rand holds that those people who ask what will be done for the poor and handicapped in society operate from the altruist-collectivist premise that men are their

⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 120.

brothers' keepers. She observes that such people accept the tribal premise that the misfortune of some is a mortgage on others.

If a man speculates on what "society" should do for the poor, he accepts thereby the collectivist premise that men's lives belong to society and that he, as a member of society, has the right to dispose of them, to set their ⁵⁰goals or to plan the "distribution" of their efforts.

Help for those less fortunate is not a political issue, nor a problem for society as a whole to solve; it is a matter for each individual man to deal with himself. "It is on the ground of . . . generalized good will and respect for the value of human life that one helps strangers in an emergency--and only in an emergency."⁵¹ Help to individuals in emergency situations is not sacrifice: since his own life is the source of all his values and the source of his capacity to value others, a man helps others because he sees value in their lives. Helping others is a selfish thing; it brings happiness to oneself. If it does not, then one should not help.

The moral purpose of a man's life is the achievement of his own happiness. This does not mean that he is indifferent to all men, that human life is of no value

⁵⁰Ayn Rand, "Collectivized Ethics," The Virtue of Selfishness (New York, 1964), p. 81.

⁵¹Ayn Rand; "The Ethics of Emergencies," The Virtue of Selfishness (New York, 1964), p. 47.

to him and that he has no reason to help others in an emergency. But it does mean that he does not subordinate his life to the welfare of others, that he does not sacrifice himself to their needs, that the relief of their suffering is not his primary concern, that any help he gives is an exception, not a rule, an act of generosity, not of moral duty, that it is marginal and incidental--as disasters are marginal and incidental in the course of human existence--and that values, not disasters, are the good⁵², the first concern and the motive power of his life.

The collectivists have "sold" men on such goals as medicare by stressing that the goal is good, but subverting the means to be used to achieve the goal. Taken out of context the goal of adequate medical care for the aged in time of illness is, of course, desirable. It is the means to achieve such a goal that the collectivists seek to obscure from mankind; because the goal is good, because it is for others and not for oneself, it should be accomplished at anyone's expense. The collectivists stress the good of the program and obscure in an impenetrable political fog the human cost of such "good" programs.

It is men's views of their public or political existence that the collectivized ethics of altruism has protected from the march of civilization and has preserved as a reservoir, a wildlife sanctuary, ruled by the mores of prehistorical savagery. If men have grasped some faint glimmer of respect for individual rights in their private dealings with one another,

⁵²Ibid., p. 49.

that glimmer vanishes when they turn to public issues-- and what leaps into the political arena is a caveman who can't conceive of any reason why the tribe may not bash in the skull of any individual if it so desires.⁵³

The characteristic that most stands out in the tribal mentality is the view of human nature as the means to achieve any public project. It is desirable to clean up slums and the environment; it is desirable to have an educated and a healthy public. But the means to achieve these goals is not made explicit. Unless the project is accomplished by the voluntary agreement of all concerned, the rights of all individual men are violated. To tax a man to provide for progress for others is to take away a man's right to the products of his own life. One cannot take away an individual's rights to grant rights to others, much less to grant rights to generations unborn.

Progress can come only out of men's surplus, that is: from the work of those men whose ability produces more than their personal consumption requires, those who are intellectually and financially able to venture out in pursuit of the new. Capitalism is the only system where such men are free to function and where progress is accompanied, not by forced privations, but by a constant rise in the general level of prosperity, of consumption and of enjoyment of life.⁵⁴

⁵³Rand, "Collectivized Ethics," pp. 81-82.

⁵⁴Ibid., p. 84.

It has been stated previously that Rand holds the bankrupt, but still dominant, political philosophy of statism responsible for the gang warfare dominating American politics.

The degree of statism in a country's political system is the degree to which it breaks up the country into rival gangs and sets men against one another. When individual rights are abrogated, there is no way to determine the justice of anyone's claims, desires or interests. The criterion, therefore, reverts to the tribal concept of: one's wishes are limited only by the power of one's gang. In order to survive under such a system, men have no choice but to fear, hate, and destroy one another⁵⁵

Rand does not maintain that the United States is fully a statist society yet: it is so to the degree that pressure group warfare dominates its politics. Fully statist societies, dictatorships, are devoted to looting the productive members of their own countries. Looting is their only way to keep power. Since they do not recognize the individual rights of their own citizens, they certainly have no compunction concerning the rights of other nations' citizens. Statist societies need war; they survive by looting their own citizens. As their own citizens are exhausted they turn to looting other nations. In a statist economy where wealth

⁵⁵ Ayn Rand, "The Roots of War," Capitalism: The Unknown Ideal (New York, 1967), pp. 36-37.

is publicly owned the citizens have no economic interests to preserve in preserving peace. Ideologically they have been trained to accept the tribal premise that what is good is that which is best for the tribe. As an individual a man does not count; foreigners and their rights to not count either. Why should they not be sacrificed for the good of the tribe? Therefore, statist societies need foreign wars in order to survive; it is survival by looting. Rand observes that during World War II Germany and Russia seized entire factories and dismantled them to ship them home, while the United States (the most capitalistic country in the world, but not entirely laissez-faire) sent billions of dollars worth of equipment to its allies. "Germany and Russia needed war: the United States did not and gained nothing Yet it is capitalism that today's peace-lovers oppose and statism that they advocate--in the name of peace."⁵⁶

Men who are free to produce have nothing to gain by looting other nations, but they do have a great deal to lose. Wars cost money and, in a free economy where wealth is privately owned, money to fight wars comes out of the

⁵⁶Ibid., p. 37.

pockets of private citizens. The essence of capitalism's foreign policy is free trade: trade does not flourish on a battlefield. A man cannot hope to recoup money spent on a war, even if the war is won. A laissez-faire capitalistic system requires a government of limited powers bounded by constitutional restrictions. Wars are started by governments, not by private individuals, and a severely delimited government is less likely to plunge a country into war. Yet, it is not a limited government that today's peace lovers are advocating:

If men want to oppose war, it is statism that they must oppose. So long as they hold the tribal notion that the individual is sacrificial fodder for the collective, that some men have the right to rule others by force, and that some (any) alleged "good" can justify it-- there can be no⁵⁷ peace within a nation and no peace among nations.

If war is ever to be outlawed it is the use of force that has to be outlawed. Force is the principle tool of statist governments, therefore, mankind cannot afford statism any longer. Laissez-faire capitalism is the only political-economic system fundamentally opposed to war; it is the only system based on individual rights, the only one that bans force from social relationships.

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 42. .

Rand even sees "force" as the implicit, hidden weapon behind the current ecology movement. Urging people to sacrifice themselves to provide comfort and security for all men did not work. The altruists now have switched to ecology, urging men to sacrifice for nature. Is saving nature the altruists' real goal? No it is not, just as it was not their goal to raise all men out of poverty. The true goal is to control man's life, to deny man's rights to his own goals, his own self interest.

Instead of their old promises that collectivism would create universal abundance and their denunciations of Capitalism for creating poverty, they are now denouncing Capitalism for creating abundance. Instead of promising comfort and security for everyone, they are now denouncing people for being comfortable and secure. They are still struggling, however, to inculcate guilt and fear; these have always been their psychological tools. Only instead of exhorting you to feel guilty for exploiting the poor, they are now exhorting you to feel guilty for exploiting land, air and water

One element, however, . . . has remained unchanged in the collectivists' technique, the element without which they would have had no chance: altruism--the appeal for⁵⁸ self-sacrifice, the denial of man's right to exist.

The ecologists maintain that a national population plan must be instituted and that the American institution of free enterprise and free choice must be modified. Technology

⁵⁸Ayn Rand, "The Anti-Industrial Revolution," The New Left: The Anti-Industrial Revolution (New York, 1971), p. 141.

has to be restricted: man does not need, indeed cannot ecologically afford, so much technological achievement. Mankind's standard of living must be brought down. Rand's answer is unequivocal: the ecologists fail to consider man's needs and the requirements for his survival. Man is treated by ecologists as though he were an unnatural phenomenon. In fact, man has to produce and keep on producing in order to survive. He has to alter his environment to suit his needs. Man cannot continue to survive by saying that he has discovered and produced enough, that he does not need to progress further. Man cannot stand still--a restricted technology is the equivalent of a censored mind.

Yet there is an ecological problem. It is a scientific, technological problem to be solved by, and only by, technology. It is not a political problem except in the passage and implementation of specific laws defining pollution that causes proven physical harm to persons or property.

. . . But it is not solutions that the leftists are seeking, it is controls

Since the enormous weight of controls created by the welfare-state theorists has hampered, burdened, corrupted, but not yet destroyed American industry, the collectivists have found--in ecology--a new excuse for the creation of more controls, more corruption, more favor-peddling, more harassment⁵⁹ of industry by more irresponsible pressure groups.

⁵⁹Ibid., p. 143.

Rand gives credit to the American people in that they have not "bought" the ecology issue completely, for many see it as a ". . . PR-manufactured issue, blown up by the bankrupt left who can find no other ground for attacking Capitalism."⁶⁰

Yet the danger is that, as on so many issues, the majority remain silent and the collectivists may yet win by default, for there is no philosophical-ideological rebuttal offered against the clamor of the ecologists, just as there is none offered against the college rebels.

What this country needs is a philosophical revolution--a rebellion against the Kantian tradition--in the name of the first of our Founding Fathers: Aristotle. This means a reassertion of the supremacy of reason, with its consequences: individualism, freedom, progress, civilization. What political system would it lead to? An untried one: full, laissez-faire capitalism.⁶¹

Man today lives in an age of force as the means for solving political problems. Whether it is called pressure group influence or consensus or whatever, the real term is force. In a proper government all relationships between people should be voluntary. Government is necessary, for man has a need for objective laws as well as a need for an arbiter to decide honest disagreements. Rand would never agree that

⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 142.

⁶¹ Ayn Rand, "From a Symposium," The New Left: The Anti-Industrial Revolution (New York, 1971), p. 98.

man could function in a state of anarchy. But America's government has failed to serve as an instrument of objectivity in human relationships; the government has created a reign of force by instituting non-objective laws left to random bureaucrats to administer. Gang warfare by pressure groups seeking their own advantage has been the inevitable result.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

Ayn Rand claims that her philosophy, Objectivism, contains a complete ethical system that provides man with the intellectual tools to understand his own nature and the relationship he has with society.

Objectivism is a philosophical movement: since politics is a branch of philosophy, Objectivism advocates certain political principles--specifically, those of laissez-faire capitalism--as the consequence and the ultimate practical application of its fundamental philosophical principles. It does not regard politics as a separate or primary goal, that is: as a goal that can be achieved without a wider ideological context.

Rand holds that man's greatest need is for a philosophy of life; man must have a clear understanding of his own nature and of man's relationship to existence. Only on such a philosophical base can man hope to formulate a consistent political theory and achieve it in practice. "Politics is the last link in the chain--the last, not the first, result of a country's intellectual trends."² Without a firm

¹Ayn Rand, "Brief Summary," The Objectivist, X (September, 1971), 1.

²Ibid.

philosophical base politics results in range of the moment decisions and goals; it results in the "me-tooism" of conservatives and the "I want it now" chants of the New Left. Since there is no philosophical base today, men are seeing in everyday political events ". . . a gruesomely eloquent spectacle of what happens to a culture deprived of philosophy and therefore, of large-scale integration and, therefore, of long-range vision--which means: deprived of reason."³ The battle is a philosophical one. To those men who say that there is no time for philosophy, that it is too late, that the country must be saved from collectivism or capitalism or pollution or whatever instantly, somehow, Rand answers that there is no time for anything but philosophy. The battle is not hopeless, the world is not inexplicable, mankind is not evil, as the majority of men would declare today. If it seems so it is because men have no values by which to judge their lives and their world. Philosophy must provide the values; Objectivism is the philosophy which does.

The essence of Objectivism is the supremacy of reason. Reason leads to the advocacy of man's mind as his basic tool for survival. In order to live man must think and choose

³Ibid., p. 2.

values resulting in long-range goals. Reason leads to egoism in ethics; man's own life becomes the standard of value. In politics the supremacy of reason leads to the political-economic system of capitalism. If an individual life is the standard of value, then only a laissez-faire political-economic system can sustain it.

Rand obviously places the responsibility for a man's values squarely upon each individual. The essence of her view of man's nature is that he must use his mind, he must think, he must never fail to pronounce moral judgment. If one fails to distinguish good from evil, evil will always flourish. The greatest example of this in practice can be found in observing the results of conservative "me-tooism." To fail to pronounce moral judgment is to be guilty of moral agnosticism, to be morally tolerant of everything. "Judge not, that ye be not judged" is a precept that leads to moral abdication. An irrational society is one of moral cowards chanting such formulas as "who am I to judge?" and "nobody is ever fully right or fully wrong." But men and governments must make moral judgments in order to initiate action. If men are unwilling to assume responsibility for asserting rational values, then thugs who do not feel any responsibility will choose values for mankind. Man must

think, he must judge, less he abdicate his very life to others. Rand grants to man a noble vision and an awesome responsibility: "Judge, and be prepared to be judged."⁴ Men are capable of thinking and judging according to rational values. If men will think and judge in this way, they will act in their own self-interest: men will choose those values that sustain their own life. Men will choose that form of government which protects their own lives best, a laissez-faire capitalist system. This is the core of Objectivist philosophy and has been Ayn Rand's crusade throughout her lifetime. All of her political theory is an outgrowth of this conviction.

Who is the enemy Ayn Rand is fighting with her philosophy of Objectivism? This is an important question, for one must understand the true and explicit nature of that enemy just as surely as one must perceive what is right. Rand urges that men have underestimated the nature of the enemy and have thus dismissed "him" with an "Oh, he does not really mean it." But "he" does mean it. Mankind's enemy (and Rand's) is the man-hater, the hater of the good for

⁴Ayn Rand, "Never Fail to Pronounce Moral Judgment," The Objectivist Newsletter, I (April, 1962), 15.

being good. The enemy is all men who see mankind as an object of sacrifice.

As long as men believe that they are facing "mis-guided idealists"--or "rebellious youth"--or a "counter-culture"--or a "new morality"--or the transition period of a changing world, or an irresistible historical process, or even an invincible powerful monster--confusion undercuts their will to resist, and intellectual self-defense is impossible. It is imperative to grasp that this is not the time for temporizing, compromising and self deception. It is necessary fully to understand the nature of the enemy and his mentality. There is no giant behind the devastation of the world--only a shriveled creature with the wizened face of a child who is out to blow up the kitchen because he cannot steal his cookies and eat them, too.⁵

Take a look at [him] now, when you face your last choice--and if you choose to perish, do so with full knowledge of how cheaply how small an enemy has claimed your life.⁶

The enemy appears in many guises: ecologists who wish to sacrifice man to nature, anarchists of the New Right who advocate no government at all, the New Leftists who maintain that man is incapable of understanding reality, and man-haters who see men as basically evil.

How does one fight such an enemy?

For once, it is I who will say that love is the answer--love in the actual meaning of the word, which is the opposite of the meaning they give it--love as a response to values, love of the good for being the good. If you

⁵ Ayn Rand, "The Age of Envy II," The Objectivist, X (August, 1971), 11.

⁶ Ayn Rand, Atlas Shrugged (New York, 1957), p. 940.

hold on to the vision of any value you love . . . and remember that that is what the enemy is after, your shudder of rebellion will give you the moral fire, the courage, and the intransigence needed in this battle. What fuel can support one's fire? Love for man at his highest potential.

The world is in the throes of a moral crisis approaching a climax. The core of the issue is Western Civilization's view of man and his life. The essence of that view depends upon the answers to two interrelated questions: 1) Is man the individual an end in himself? and 2) Does man have the right to happiness on this earth? Throughout history man has been torn by profound ambivalence on these questions: achievements resulted from those periods when men acted as if the answers were "yes," but, with rare exceptions, their spokesman, the philosophers, kept proclaiming a thunderous "no." It is Ayn Rand's conviction that mankind can no longer live with this unresolved conflict.

⁷Rand, "The Age of Envy II," p. 11.

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